LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for processing sheet material such as bank notes, comprising

- a transport path for the sheet material,
- a checking device for checking the sheet material with at least two components lying opposite each other along the transport path,
- a conveyor belt located in transport direction before the checking device and transport devices opposite thereto arranged to hold and guide the sheet material, wherein the conveyor belt with the help of at least one deflection roller is led away from the transport path before the checking device, said ~~so that a~~ sheet material in the sensing region of the checking device [[is]] being without [[a]] guidance by a conveyor belt, and
- clamping rings, which are disposed coaxial to the at least one deflection roller disposed in transport direction before the checking device and project over the conveyor belt,

wherein the transport devices lying opposite the conveyor belt co-operate with the clamping rings, in order to grasp sheet material guided in the transport path and to guide it through between the two components of the checking device, and by the co-operation of the transport devices with the clamping rings the sheet material is led through between the two components of the checking device in plane alignment and for supporting this process a guide plate is provided, and includes a zone that ~~which~~ combs with the clamping rings.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the conveyor belt extends around the checking device via at least one deflection roller.

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clamping rings at least along their outside circumference comprise elastic material.

4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the circumference path of the clamping rings slightly overlaps with a circumference path of the transport devices co-operating with them.

5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clamping rings and the at least one deflection roller are disposed on a common shaft.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for processing sheet material such as bank notes, comprising

- a transport path for the sheet material,
- a checking device for checking the sheet material with at least two components lying opposite each other along the transport path,
- a conveyor belt located in transport direction before the checking device and transport devices opposite thereto arranged to hold and guide the sheet material, wherein the conveyor belt with the help of at least one deflection roller is led away from the transport path before the checking device, said sheet material in the sensing region of the checking device being without guidance by a conveyor belt, and
- clamping rings, which are disposed coaxial to the at least one deflection roller disposed in transport direction before the checking device and project over the conveyor belt,

wherein the transport devices lying opposite the conveyor belt co-operate with the clamping rings, in order to grasp sheet material guided in the transport path and to guide it through between the two components of the checking device, and by the co-operation of the transport devices with the clamping rings the sheet material is led through between the two components of the checking device in plane alignment and for supporting this process a guide plate is provided, and includes a zone that combs with the clamping rings; ~~The apparatus according to claim 1,~~

wherein the transport devices are actively driven and the clamping rings independently of the at least one deflection roller passively rotate along with the transport rollers.

7. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the clamping rings are rigidly connected to each other.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for processing sheet material such as bank

notes, comprising

- a transport path for the sheet material,

- a checking device for checking the sheet material with at least two components lying opposite each other along the transport path,

- a conveyor belt located in transport direction before the checking device and transport devices opposite thereto arranged to hold and guide the sheet material, wherein the conveyor belt with the help of at least one deflection roller is led away from the transport path before the checking device, said sheet material in the sensing region of the checking device being without guidance by a conveyor belt, and

- clamping rings, which are disposed coaxial to the at least one deflection roller disposed in transport direction before the checking device and project over the conveyor belt,

wherein the transport devices lying opposite the conveyor belt co-operate with the clamping rings, in order to grasp sheet material guided in the transport path and to guide it through between the two components of the checking device, and by the co-operation of the transport devices with the clamping rings the sheet material is led through between the two components of the checking device in plane alignment and for supporting this process a guide plate is provided, and includes a zone that combs with the clamping rings; ~~The apparatus according to claim 1,~~

wherein the guide plate extends opposite one of the two components of the checking device along the transport path and defines a guiding channel for the sheet material to be checked, the narrowest point of which lies in transport direction behind the clamping rings.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the guiding channel continuously widens in transport direction behind the narrowest point.

10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transport devices lying opposite the conveyor belt are transport rollers in transport direction spaced apart from each other.

11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transport devices lying opposite the conveyor belt also comprise a conveyor belt, which is led

away from the transport path before the checking device via one deflection roller.